

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



February 3, 2004

ALL COUNTY LETTER: 04-05

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES OUTCOME AND
ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

REFERENCE: WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE SECTION 10601.2,
STATUTES OF 2001 (AB 636)

Pursuant to State Law (AB 636), effective January 2004, a new Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System will begin operation in California. The new system, referred to as the California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR), was developed in accordance with the provisions of WIC 10601.2 and focuses primarily on measuring outcomes in Safety, Permanence and Child and Family Well-Being. The new system replaces the former Child Welfare Services Oversight System which focused exclusively on regulatory compliance and brings California's oversight into alignment with the Federal Child and Family Service Review oversight system of the states.

OVERVIEW

The new system operates on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, community involvement and public reporting of program outcomes. The principle components of the system include: Quarterly Outcome and Accountability Reports published by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS); County Self-Assessments; County Peer Quality Case Reviews; County System Improvement Plans and State Technical Assistance and Monitoring.

The features of each component include:

- Quarterly Outcome and Accountability County Data Reports - in early 2004, CDSS will begin issuing quarterly reports with key safety, permanence and well being indicators for each county. These quarterly reports provide summary level Federal and State program measures that will serve as the basis for the county self assessment reviews and be used to track State and county performance over time. The initial January 2004 report will serve as the baseline level of performance for each county and represents the starting point that each county

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- ☒ State Law Change
- ☐ Federal Law or Regulation Change
- ☐ Court Order
- ☐ Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
- ☐ Initiated by CDSS

will use to measure improvement. It is important that counties not draw comparisons to other counties or even to the State as a whole given the differences in demographics, resources and practice. The intent of the new system is for each county, through their self assessment, to determine the reasons for their current level of performance and to develop a plan for measurable improvement. (Note: the initial Quarterly Data Report does not contain all of the elements in the C-CFSR matrix listed in the CWS Outcomes and Accountability Conceptual Design. The remaining measures are under development and will be reported for the next self assessment cycle).

- County Self-Assessment - is a focused analysis of the data from the January 2004 report performed by each county of its' own Child Welfare Services program including such services provided to probation youth. The county Child Welfare Agency in partnership with the county Probation Department, proportionate to their share of children in the system, will work together with public and private agencies, the judiciary and the community to complete the assessment. The Self-Assessment Outline and Instructions provide the requirements and format to ensure that the county examines all program areas. This is necessary to determine the basis for current level of performance and to identify procedural, systemic, practice or resource barriers to improved performance. Counties are strongly encouraged to utilize existing planning processes and/or existing community based groups to facilitate the public input into the self assessment process.
- County Peer Quality Case Reviews (PQCR) – an extension of the county's self-assessment process and is guided by questions raised by the analysis of outcome data and systemic factors. The goal of the PQCR is to analyze specific practice areas and to identify key patterns of agency strengths and concerns for the host county. The PQCR process uses peers from other counties to promote the exchange of best practice ideas within the host county and to peer reviewers. The peer reviewers provide objectivity to the process and serve as an immediate onsite training resource to the host county.
- County System Improvement Plans - are developed by the lead agencies in collaboration with their local partners and are approved by the County Board of Supervisors and CDSS. The overall focus of the plan is a commitment to specific measurable improvements in performance outcomes that the county will achieve within a defined timeframe. The County System Improvement Plan will establish program priorities, define the actions steps to achieve improvement and establish the specific percentage increases in performance that the county will achieve within the term of the plan. The County System Improvement Plan is based on the previous components and it is recommended that all counties include early

involvement of the Board of Supervisors or their representatives in the county Self-Assessment to ensure timely submission of the Plan to the State.

- **State Technical Assistance and Monitoring** – The CDSS staff will monitor the completion of all activities under the C-CFSR for each county, including: ongoing tracking of county performance measures, reviewing county self-assessments for completeness, participation in peer quality case reviews and review and approval of the county system improvement plans. The CDSS will provide guidance and technical assistance to counties during each phase of C-CFSR process and ultimately track and report on progress toward measurable goals set by each county in their plan. As the new C-CFSR system is fully implemented, CDSS will compile the county information to fulfill the requirements for a Statewide Self-Assessment and Program Improvement Plan under the Federal review process.

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS AND TIMEFRAMES

The new C-CFSR system is effective beginning January 2004. When fully implemented, the C-CFSR process will be a tri-annual review with a third of the counties completing all steps in the review process every third year, with annual updates to their County System Improvement Plan. For the initial implementation of the new system, however, all counties are required to complete a County Self-Assessment and County System Improvement Plan.

The CDSS will issue instructions in future All County Letters regarding conversion of the C-CFSR to a tri-annual process and, any changes to the forms or instruments. The CDSS will also issue implementing regulations. For purposes of the initial implementation year the following actions must be taken no later than the date indicated:

- 1) **Quarterly Outcome and Accountability Data Reporting Begins:** January 2004

The initial report will be sent to each county in early 2004.
- 2) **County Self-Assessment Reviews Completed and Submitted to CDSS:** June 30, 2004
- 3) **County System Improvement Plans Approved by the County Board of Supervisors and the California Department of Social Services:** Sept. 30, 2004

INSTRUCTIONS AND FORMS

Attached you will find:

- a) A sample quarterly County Outcome and Accountability County Data Report (Attachment A) and the report Interpretation Guide (Attachment B), which defines the terms used and identifies additional sources of information for each item in the report. It is important that counties as part of their analysis of performance review the underlying breakout of information, which will include breakouts by age, ethnicity and placement type. In this way, the analysis can focus on specific issues impacting the unique needs of the subset of population that make up each county caseload.
- b) The County Self-Assessment Outline and Instructions (Attachment C) which describes the content of the self-assessment and who must participate.
- c) The County Peer Quality Case Review guide, instructions and forms (Attachment D). For the implementation year counties are not required to conduct a PQCR. Several counties on a voluntary basis will test the peer quality case review process, which will subsequently be refined based on input and incorporated into the future tri-annual reviews.
- d) The County System Improvement Plan Instructions (Attachment C) which provides the instructions for the format, content and who must participate.

The implementation of the new C-CFSR is a significant event in the evolution of the Child Welfare Services system in California. It represents a fundamental shift from monitoring process activities to evaluating improved outcomes for the children and families served by this important program. It also represents an opportunity to involve all aspects of the system and the community into the discussion on how to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

If you have any questions, you may contact Ellie Jones, Chief of the Children's Services Operations Bureau at (916) 681-8100.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

BRUCE WAGSTAFF
Deputy Director
Children & Family Services Division

Attachments